

092709 **WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO GOD?**

(Throughout the history of salvation God has desired to share his own Spirit with us. Why is it so important to God to do this?)

God's Spirit is poured out on Moses and Moses becomes a changed man. The responsibilities of being leader and prophet are too much for him. God intervenes again and apportions more of his Spirit on 72 others in the community of Israel. Moses rejoices and voices his own desire that all should receive the gift of the Spirit.

In the New Testament, after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles and other disciples are still lost even though they have experienced the crucified One as alive and risen from the grave. Jesus comes and goes, appears and disappears but it is still not clear what it all means and what they are to do. When at last he departs from them at the Ascension into heaven they begin to meet in earnest. They gather every day in prayer and on the ninth day (Pentecost) they are rewarded with the gift of God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit changes them completely. They are no longer afraid. And where they once ran away out of fear they now go right into the Temple Courtyard and preach the Good News about Jesus who is the Christ of God. But it is not until the Spirit is poured out that this happens. The Holy Spirit is the catalyst in their lives transforming them from fearful followers into courageous advocates and disciples.

What is the Spirit of God? What is the Spirit of God like? How would you describe the Holy Spirit not from what you learned about the Spirit when you were under instruction but from your own inner reflections and human experiences? Everyone in this church this morning has received the Holy Spirit—in your baptism for the new life of God's grace at work within us. We receive a second outpouring in the sacrament of Confirmation when we are strengthened at the beginning of our teenage years for the arduous task of growing to adulthood.

For me, I tend to think that for most Catholics, most of the time, we do not think very often about the Holy Spirit in our lives. But the Spirit has been given. How can we tell? How can we come to know about God's Spirit and how this Spirit works in us? A few preliminary points. God's Spirit is personal because God is three persons bound together by love. God's Spirit is holy because our God is holy. God's Spirit is powerful but not overpowering in us because if we are overpowered by God's Spirit then we would have lost our freedom and God does not want that. God's Spirit is subtle and gentle in us. God's Spirit is a loving Spirit and God's Spirit is true.

Now, let us look at how the Spirit sometimes manifests himself in us.

- 1) Ever catch yourself right before you were going to say something that would have been disastrous had you said it? Ever wonder why that happened or how that happened? Ever wondered what stopped you? Or who stopped you?
- 2) Ever get asked by someone for your wisdom or counsel? Perhaps it is someone that you really want to help and suddenly you find yourself saying things that are wise but which you never even remember having thought before? Ever ask yourself: "Where did that come from?"
- 3) Ever pick up the phone to dial a friend or loved one only to have them already on the line because they were dialing to speak with you? We can chalk this up to happenstance or we can acknowledge that the grace of God, the very Spirit of God is at work even in moments when we are not aware of it.

- 4) Ever have a disagreement with a spouse or good friend in which you finally make up your mind to defer to the other person only to discover that they too have decided to defer to you? Ever wonder why this may have happened? Is this willingness to defer not part of what we are called to as followers of Christ? And is not the Spirit the same Spirit leading us to this kind of deference?
- 5) Ever had the experience of a period of really good prayer where you kind of get on a roll and you know that you are in synch with God? Ever ask yourself if the Spirit which indwells your soul is helping out albeit without a lot of ostentatious display?
- 6) Ever find yourself in a situation where you speak just the right word at just the right time? Ever wonder how that might have happened? Is it just coincidence or is it God-incidence? Might the Spirit of the living God be at work within us?
- 7) Ever spoken up in courage saying a true but difficult thing and have others tell you that it took a lot of courage to do that but you didn't feel courageous? What you felt was trepidation and perspiration but there was courage present in you notwithstanding? Where does that courage come from even though the feeling of courage was absent? The gifts of the Holy Spirit include fortitude or courage.

You see that the list could go on and on.

- 8) Ever find yourself renewing your commitment to become a better Catholic? Where does all this come from? It is the Spirit. Here's the thing. We have been given the Spirit by Christ and the assurance by Christ that in his sacraments the Spirit will be given. That is his guarantee. But nowhere does Our Lord ever say that the only way the Spirit can be given is through the sacraments. The Lord is not limited in that way.

God is always sharing his Spirit. We should not resent this action or become suspicious. God does not play favorites but is generous beyond measure in pouring out his Spirit. But we must ask ourselves if we have truly, consciously opened ourselves to God's Spirit? We must ask ourselves if we have truly surrendered ourselves into the Spirit of God. Have we prayed to God asking for the Spirit's guidance or enlightenment—on a regular basis? We must do this—and often.

The Holy Spirit is real but sometimes seems to be so far beyond us. We couldn't even live if we had not received God's own Spirit. But the more we believe, the more we ask—and then the more we know—through greater faith. The more profound the experience, the more we love—in the Spirit of Our Lord, already poured out on us.